Familiar CPR Triangle Service Ends Feb. 25

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honored midnight sailing will be cancelled permanently.

CPR officials said "summer" would probably mean the period of daylight saving, April 26 to Sept. 26, but the matter was still being studied for final decision.

Coming on top of the recent Trans-Canada Air lines announcement that it wanted to drop its Victoria-Seattle service, the CPR desertion of the city left citizens feeling like marooned sailors.

On a tropical island, of course.

CITY BUZZES

The announcement that the "last" CPR ferry would leave the battered old Belleville Street dock in less than three weeks shocked the budget-busy B.C. legislature and set the whole Victoria area abuzz.

Death knell on the winter CPR service was followed by announcement Washington State Ferries would start its Sidney-Anacortes service Feb. 26, the day following the CPR bow-out.

The CPR said it would also drop its three-times daily summer service between Victoria and Port Angeles with Washington State Ferries to continue on the run.

NANAIMO SERVICE

Eight round trips daily will continue to be made between Vancouver and Nanaimo, the CPR said, with possible 10 or 11 trips in the summer.

Assurance was given of connecting bus service to and from Victoria to provide through transportation between Victoria and Vancouver in less time than the direct ship service between the two cities.

An official protest to the federal government appeared probable last night after the CPR announcement was brought up in the legislature following the termination of Premier Bennett's budget speech.

INVESTIGATE POSSIBLE

A possible investigation by the federal house on its own also appeared likely.

Victoria Conservative MP A. DeB. McPhillips said in Ottawa last night he would "certainly do all that was possible in an attempt to have the service continued."

Defence Minister George Pearkes, federal member for Esquimalt-Saanich, said he would study the situation, but would reserve comment until he had done so.

LOUD PROTESTS

The man in the street, who has, according to the CPR statement, been swinging increasingly to plane travel between Victoria and the mainland, was nevertheless loud in his protest against the windup of the ferry service.

By a ratio of nine to one, he was against the move.

In an Ottawa statement to Colonist correspondent Tom Green, Mr. McPhillips said he was "appalled to hear of this curtailment of service—one I have known all my life.

"Presumably the CPR can show these ships are no longer a paying proposition and to my own knowledge many people are using the airlines and the Nanaimo-Vancouver boat service as quicker and more desirable than the slow boat from Victoria to mainland.

"However it would be a frightful blow to the port of Victoria and I trust something can be worked out to prevent this loss of service," he said.

The CPR notice gave declining traffic and increasing costs as at the root of the decision to quit the field.

COSTLY REPLACEMENTS

Vice-president Fraine said "it is conservatively estimated a loss in excess of $300,000 would result from continued operation, apart from an outlay of $4,000,000 which would be required to repair and modernize ships on the run, or an estimated $12,000,000 to build replacements."

He said that, in 1947, the Princess Joan and the Princess Elizabeth carried a daily average of 1,130 passengers in the winter season. This traffic had dwindled to less than 600 daily while travel by air had steadily increased.

He said the average daily cost of operating the triangle-run vessels had increased to $5,000 a day and that continuation of the service could not be justified "to handle two bus loads of passengers on each sailing."

SEASCAPE FEATURES

The summer service will be handled by the Princess Patricia and Princess Marguerite. Officials said the fate of the Princess Joan and Princess Elizabeth, now being retired from the service and familiar seascape features to coast dwellers for 29 years, has still not been decided.

Halt in the service affects an estimated 200 crew members and comes as contracts were signed giving ships' officers of the National Association of Marine Engineers and the Merchant Service Guild a 17½-per-cent wage boost.

Company officials expressed regret at the dismissal of the 200 crewmen. They said no plans had been made to absorb the men in other jobs.

SOME REHIRED

R. B. Heyneke, Seafarers' International Union agent in Vancouver, said some SIU men would be rehired for relief work.

Nevertheless, Denis McKeown, national secretary, National Association of Marine Engineers of Canada, said in viewing the "broad picture," this is shaping up as a "black year for the skilled people in Canada's merchant marine."

He said the surprise announcement caught him "flat-footed" because he had expected the CPR to continue direct service to Victoria "at least until the government ferries are running" in 1961.

The news gave an ironic cast to contract settlements recently between the company and the SIU, which were expected to keep the service running without repetition of last year's costly strike "until 1961."

It stepped up pressure on the B.C. government and Transportation Minister P. A. Gaglardi for the planned government - operated Island-Mainland ferry service. Still being sought is a mainland terminus site.

But cessation of the CPR midnight run, at least, was not entirely a surprise. As far back as last August, a Colonist news story said the company was considering "lopping off" its midnight run and contemplating other cutbacks.

Speculation arose also when time for the company to apply for licence renewal approached without any move being made in that direction.

An anticipated increase in air traffic between Vancouver, Victoria and Seattle also brought the Pacific Western Airlines application to take over the triangle routes from TCA into new prominence.

Protests against TCA's move to quit the field are expected to increase in the light of the latest ferry service development.

Shocked MLAs Ask Ottawa Intervention

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"The federal government should see that the service is maintained until a suitable alternative can be provided," he said.

ADVANCES NOTED

Opposition leader Robert Strachan said in the House: "With all the advances the CPR has received from Canada it should make it very easy for them to keep it going until our ferries are running."

After the House rose, other members and cabinet ministers had this to say:

TERRIBLE THING

George Gregory (L — Victoria)—"A terrible thing . . . if the federal government won't do anything, I think the provincial government should provide a subsidy to keep the boats going until our own ferries are in operation."

John Tisdalle (SC—Saanich) —"It seems this mercenary giant believes in striking at the heart of the family unit—which is the wage-earner—for this will affect everyone's pocketbook."

BAD RECORD

Highways Minister P. A. Gaglardi—"This will be a terrible blow for Victoria. Somehow the ships must be kept running . . . the CPR has a record of establishing services and then pulling out. The CPR was recently granted a 17-per-cent freight-rate increase so surely it can afford to take a loss on some part of its operation."

Donald Smith (SC — Victoria) — "I am not surprised, after the CPR's intolerable attitude last June during the strike. My sympathies were not with the CPR but with the unions. The CPR's arrogance, indifference and lack of co-operation was disgusting. I think we should invoke the Civil Defence Act again until our boats are in operation."

Herbert Bruch (SC—Esquimalt)—"I wouldn't only suggest . . . I would demand that they carry on the service. The CPR has withdrawn more and more service . . . if they are going to withdraw their services, they should get out completely."

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